

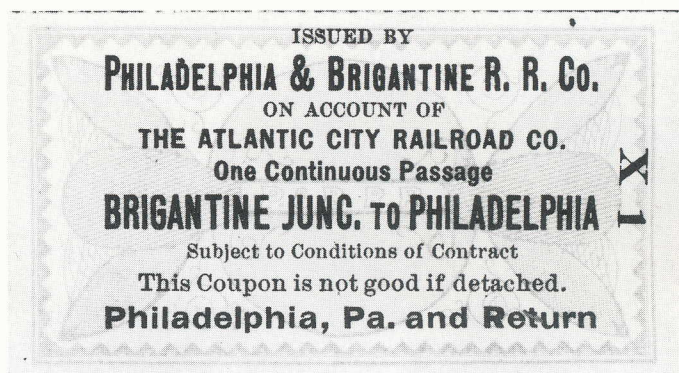
Chapter 5

The Brigantine Beach Railroad

After many surveys conducted over the years into the coastal area north of the Camden and Atlantic Rail Road, the first line to be constructed was incorporated on August 7, 1889. This railroad, called the Brigantine Beach Railroad, was encouraged by the expansion of the Atlantic City Railroad and the prospering seashore resort industry, which became interested in the development of the beautiful seven miles of Brigantine Island just north of Atlantic City. The BBRR was incorporated in the state of New Jersey to build a line from Pomona at the junction with the C&A to the beach about midway between the two inlets.

By November 1, 1899, chief engineer Edward C. Scott of Oceanville had surveyed the line and contractor Coffin & Company of New York City had completed the first two miles of track construction. The grading proved very slight and the maximum curvature was only three degrees. The C&A profited handsomely by the construction as they delivered 208 carloads of material by the end of 1889 while work continued. Work on the line progressed steadily into 1890 during which time the ACRR became increasingly interested. Incorporated on April 21, 1890, the Pomona Branch Railroad Company was created to connect the BBRR with the ACRR. This 1.25-mile connecting line extended to the ACRR's mainline at a point 43.43 miles from Kaighn's Point, where a new station was constructed. The major obstacle to the construction of this line was overcome on August 29, 1890, when an agreement was signed with the C&A concerning the grade crossing just south of Pomona. The crossing was installed by the C&A while all related expenses were paid by the BBRR including the cost of the necessary signals. When operations began, C&A towermen were to be employed at the expense of the BBRR. Furthermore, the agreement specified that C&A trains were to be given priority over the short line's moves. After the new connecting line was completed at a cost of \$11,802, the former BBRR connection with the C&A became almost entirely dormant. No agreement was ever made for further interchange with the Camden & Atlantic.

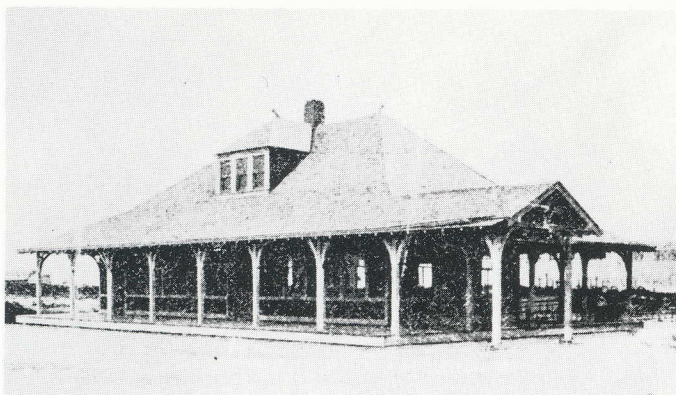
Meanwhile during April, the contractor completed with relative ease the BBRR to Oceanville with the difficult portion remaining. Beyond Oceanville construction was continued most of the summer to complete 3.10 miles of trackage over the salt marsh and a 9,050-foot trestle including a drawbridge at each end. As the line neared completion, the BBRR was leased on August 18 by the Atlantic City Railroad for ten years at an annual rental of 30 percent of the short line's gross receipts. Three days later the railroad was opened to Brigantine Beach followed by revenue service



beginning on August 28. Initially service extended over the 13.90 miles of 60-pound steel from the original junction with the C&A. During the fall, operations were changed to connect with the ACRR and on January 27, 1891, the Pomona Branch Railroad was consolidated with the BBRR.

Originally, the Brigantine Beach Railroad had about 1.5 miles of siding, but later in 1893 side track mileage was expanded to about 2.3 miles with team tracks located at Pomona near the C&A junction, Port Republic station, Oceanville station and Brigantine Beach station. Also included in this total were two wye tracks, one located at Brigantine Junction on the ACRR and one at Brigantine Beach on the marsh. Facilities at Oceanville included a water tank, a coal bin, a coal loading platform and a 16 x 28 foot combination passenger and freight station. As the locomotive laid overnight here, an early morning and early evening run between Oceanville and Brigantine was necessary to provide the scheduled service. For the entire existence of the railroad, service consisted of a morning and afternoon round trip to Brigantine Junction originating at Brigantine Beach. Passengers changed trains at Brigantine Junction station connecting with main line Camden-Atlantic City runs.

What freight business existed was handled by the return morning trip to Brigantine Beach and the following west-bound run in the early afternoon. This mixed train required 20 minutes longer than the passenger round trip schedule of one hour. Freight traffic was a low volume item and primarily consisted of coal, construction materials, oysters and fish. In order to improve freight revenues, Mr. Robert S. Davis, Manager of the BBRR, requested on May 9, 1892, permission to spend \$100 to dig shallow wells to serve as freshening platforms for oysters at Grasse Bay. The West Jersey Railroad was said to have had such platforms at Absecon and Pleasantville and the BBRR intended to also participate in this business.



Collection of H. F. Haneman

The P&B's Brigantine terminal was located on Roos Boulevard. The station tracks terminated alongside the platform on the right of the building.



Collection of Theodore A. Xaras

The abandoned P&B station at Oceanville, which was the location of the engine facilities in earlier years, was once occupied by an agent-operator.



Collection of Theodore A. Xaras

The ACRR's Brigantine Junction station was situated alongside the northbound main track with the Brigantine line behind. All P&B passengers changed trains here. Note the typical ACRR station sign.

As a result of the new railroad, activity on the island grew to the point that the Brigantine Transit Company built an electric trolley line about 1893, which extended the seven-mile length of the island from a ferry connection at Absecon Inlet. The transit company's roster included the only double deck cars on the coast of New Jersey and eventually totaled nine motor cars, five trailers and one motor dummy. Passenger traffic grew rapidly totaling 26,000 patrons in 1893, 65,000 in 1894 and reaching 100,000 in 1895. Competition created by this line did not help the railroad, whose revenues were never very good and were primarily generated by travel between Atlantic City and Brigantine Beach. Since no interest was ever paid on the \$350,000 of outstanding bonds issued in November, 1889, the mortgage holder, Holland Trust Company, began suit to initiate foreclosure proceedings by June 1, 1894. A temporary receiver, Judge Howard Carrow of Camden, was appointed on June 15. With the line in such poor financial condition, it is hard to understand reports of surveys being made during March, 1895, to extend the line five miles from Pomona to Egg Harbor City, paralleling the C&A and ACRR. These surveys were sponsored by George H. Cook of New York City, who was secretary of the Brigantine Transit Company and also an important investor in both the railroad and real estate developments on the island. His influence was extended on August 1, 1895, when he took possession of the BBRR following a successful bid of \$51,000 during the foreclosure sale held on June 27. Because of the continuing losses, it is understandable that on August 15 the ACRR announced their desire to cancel the operating lease. Each year it had been necessary for the ACRR to make heavy improvements to the roadbed as well as repair damages to the trestles caused by winter storms.

During the end of March, 1896, a new company was formed by Mr. Cook, who became president. On April 1, this new company was incorporated as the Philadelphia & Brigantine Railroad. Mr. Cook then arranged for the Brigantine Transit Company to be leased to the P&B for the summer season of 1896 at a cost of \$5,000 in addition to needed repairs totaling about \$4,000. Operations for the new P&B from April 1 to December 31, 1896, proved to be just as unprofitable as before with expenses of \$10,321 being about 93 percent greater than the total income. During the following year, a slight improvement occurred as expenses exceeded income by 72 percent on about ten percent less total revenue.

On September 30, 1897, the ACRR canceled the lease, discontinued operating the line and removed their equipment because of the continued deficit operations. This move required the P&B to acquire a small saddle tank steam engine and lease an ACRR combine passenger car. In January of 1898 when their engine was unavailable for service, the ACRR leased to the short line engine No. 1010 for four days at the standard \$5.50 a day rate. The two daily except Sunday round trips were continued with only minor schedule changes as required to meet connecting ACRR trains at Brigantine Junction. During this time, freight revenues were about double passenger receipts while mail and express amounted to about eight percent of the total. When the WJ&S double-tracked their main line in 1898, a new control tower and interlocking plant was built at the diamond crossing. New home and distant signals, derails on the P&B and sand tracks (see footnote) on the WJ&S were constructed.

In an attempt to boost lagging passenger revenues, Mr.

Cook issued flyers advertising a rather circuitous through route to Atlantic City by way of Brigantine Junction, Oceanville, Brigantine, then over the Brigantine Transit Company connecting with the steamboats at Absecon Inlet. Understandably, this route did not become very popular. Special excursions from Atlantic City to Lily Lake Park at Oceanville by way of the BT and the railroad were operated for a time. On Thursday, August 30, 1900, about 800 excursionists were transported to Lily Lake. A Brigantine Beach newspaper, "The Moon", reported that two engines and two cars had to make eight trips to transport the crowd.

During 1900, 1901 and 1902, total revenues continued at about \$7,000 to \$8,000, while expenses totaled \$14,000 to \$16,500 to exceed revenues every year by more than 100 percent. The accumulated loss by 1903 totaled \$31,462, when on September 12 a storm destroyed about 2,000 feet of the trestle. Discontinuance of coal deliveries resulted in the shut down of the BT power plant and trolley service. Because of the continuing deficit operations, the decision was made not to rebuild the trestle even though four cars owned by the P&R were stranded on the island. Limited service was provided to Port Republic and Oceanville. A boat transfer across the bay to the island was contemplated. This occasional service must have been operated with ACRR power as P&B No. 1 arrived at the Camden shop on September 19 in need of heavy repair. On October 9 all service was terminated and on the 15th the engine shop received word that there was no money available to pay for the cost of repairing the engine. On October 21 orders were issued by the P&R's General Manager not to repair the No. 1 and also to inspect the Brigantine Branch so as to determine the cost of putting the line in running order for the winter. As repairs were estimated to be too costly, all tariffs for the line were removed six days later.

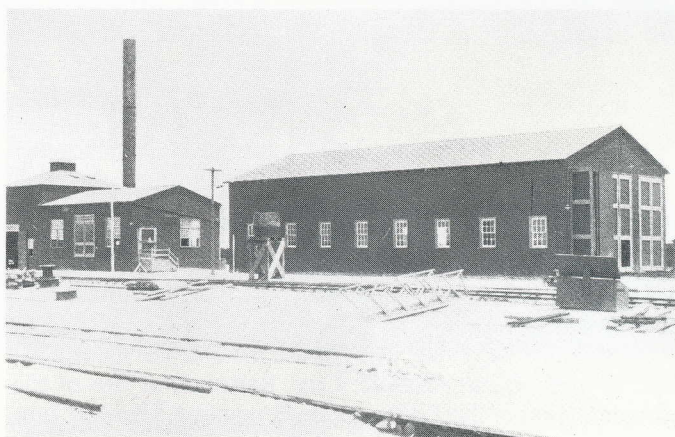
With the P&B bankrupt, R.D.A. Parrott was appointed receiver on November 17, 1903. The entire P&B as well as the Brigantine Transit Co., which also had ceased operation on September 16, were sold at foreclosure to J.O.Herald of Newark on April 15, 1904. With four freight cars still stranded on the island, the P&R decided after extensive deliberation to float the cars back. In an unprecedented action under the direction of ACRR Superintendent A.G.



Collection of H.F. Haneman

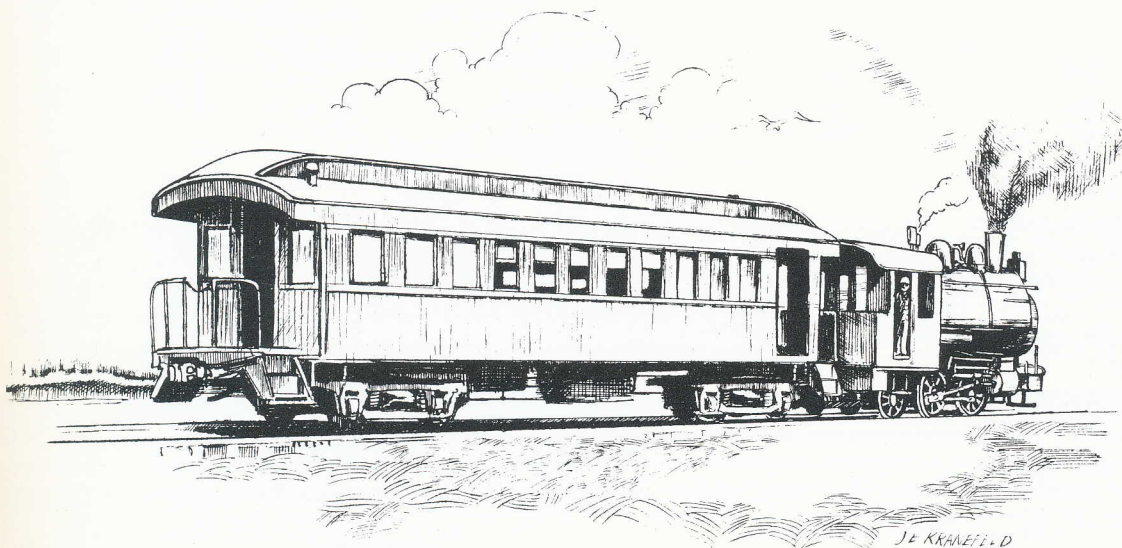
Brigantine Transit Company's trolley car No. 2 was one of several double-deckers used during the summer season.

Collection of H.F. Haneman



(Above) Located near the Brigantine station was the Brigantine Transit Company's power house and electric car barn. The passenger platform is in the foreground.

(Below) After the ACRR terminated their lease of the P&B, the short line continued operating with a small saddle-tank engine and a leased ACRR combine.



Drawn by James E. Kranefeld



Collection of Theodore A. Xaras

The P&B's crossing of the C&A was located just south of Pomona. This scene was taken many years after 1907 when the diamonds were removed. A pair of crossing frogs can be seen resting on top of the dormant track in the foreground.

(Below) This excursion was an interesting attempt to generate traffic over the roundabout route of the trolley and steam short line.

McCausland, P&R car float No. 5 was towed from Wilmington, Delaware, at 5 pm April 29, passing through Absecon Inlet at 3 pm the following day. On May 1, 1904, the cars were loaded on to the float from the damaged trestle using wooden rails. A northeaster storm delayed departure of the return trip to Wilmington until May 3 when the voyage was made without incident arriving on the 4th.

On January 24, 1905, Mr. Herald filed for the incorporation of the North Atlantic City Railroad to cover the reorganization of the P&B and the Brigantine Transit Company. After taking possession of the two lines on June 24, 1905, he decided to dismantle them for salvage. Orders were received by the Camden shop on August 16, 1906, to scrap the P&B No. 1 keeping record of all costs. One report stated that some rails were removed during 1907 including some of the damaged trestle and the diamond crossing at Pomona, which was pulled up by the WJ&S. However, since Mr. Herald died about 1901 before the scrapping had begun, most of the trackage of the P&B and the BT remained on the ground for many years. A scrap drive during World War I resulted in removal of all the rail on the mainland. Tax assessment reports as late as 1926 showed 4,224 feet of siding at Brigantine Beach and freight platforms at Oceanville and Brigantine Beach. A new company, also called the North Atlantic City Railroad, was projected about 1929 to rebuild much of the 13.90 miles of the old P&B. Taxes were paid from 1929 to 1932 on a property valuation of \$808 and a franchise valued at \$1,000, but reconstruction and operation never materialized. Eventually, after the highway bridge from Atlantic City was built and World War II created a strong demand for scrap steel, truckers carried away the rails from the island ending the saga of a seashore short line that never earned a penny.

FOOTNOTE:

Sand tracks were facing point spurs covered with sand that were used at mainline interlockings instead of derails to stop moving trains.

EXCURSION

TO

Atlantic City

(via BRIGANTINE)

Saturday, Aug. 25, 1900

Special trains of open cars will be run on the following schedule:

Leave	A. M.	A. M.	P. M.
Brigantine Junction		9.35	5.30
Pomona		9.40	5.34
Absecon Road			
Port Republic		10.05	5.48
Oceanville	7.30	10.20	5.52
Arr. Atlantic City	8.30	11.30	7.00

Return Boats will Atlantic City at 2.30, 6.00 and 11.30 P. M.

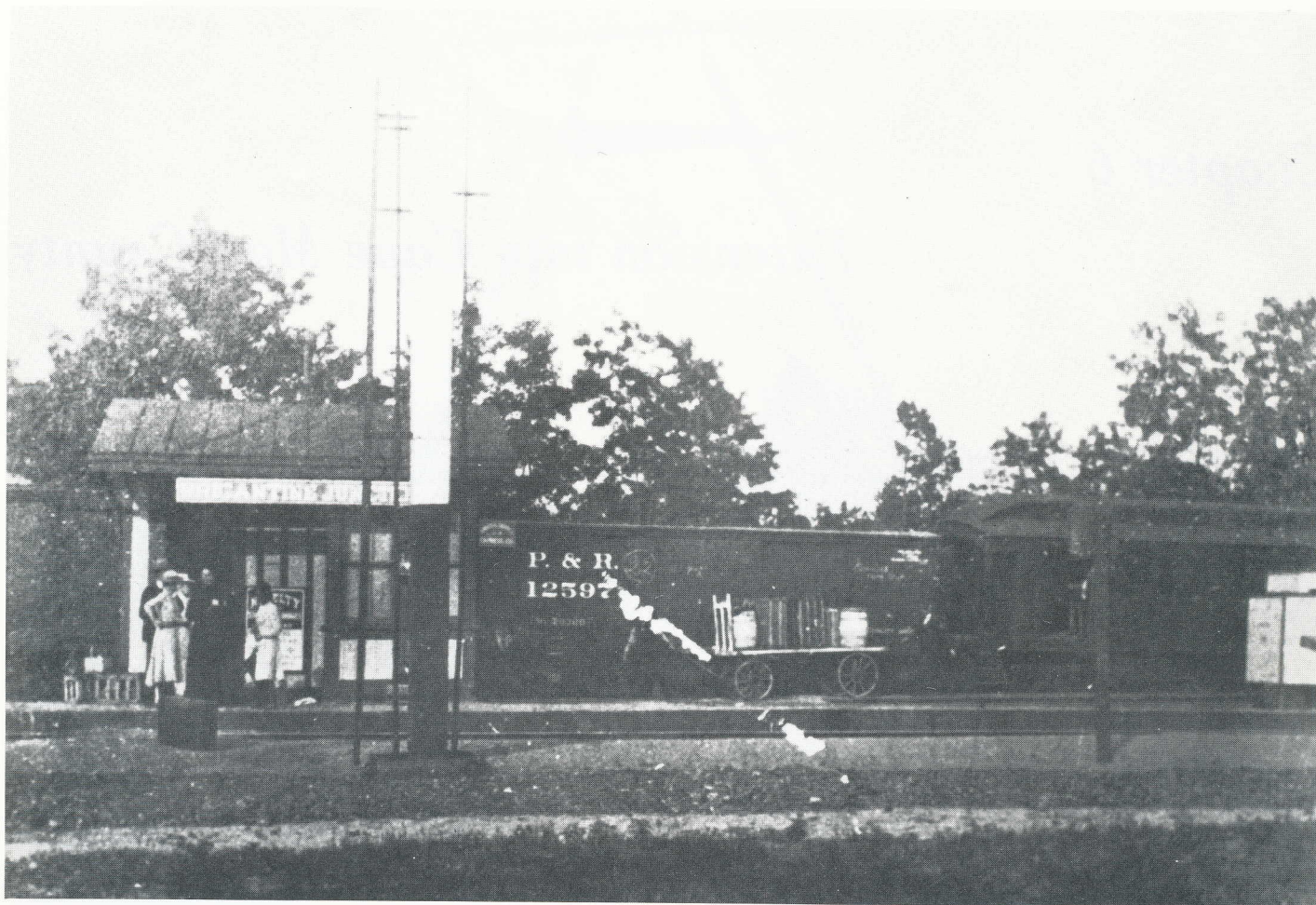
Round Trip Fare - 40 Cts.

Including Trolley, Steamboat, etc.

C. R. VANETTEN, Gen'l Manager.

GLOBE PRINT, 18 S. MISSOURI AVE.

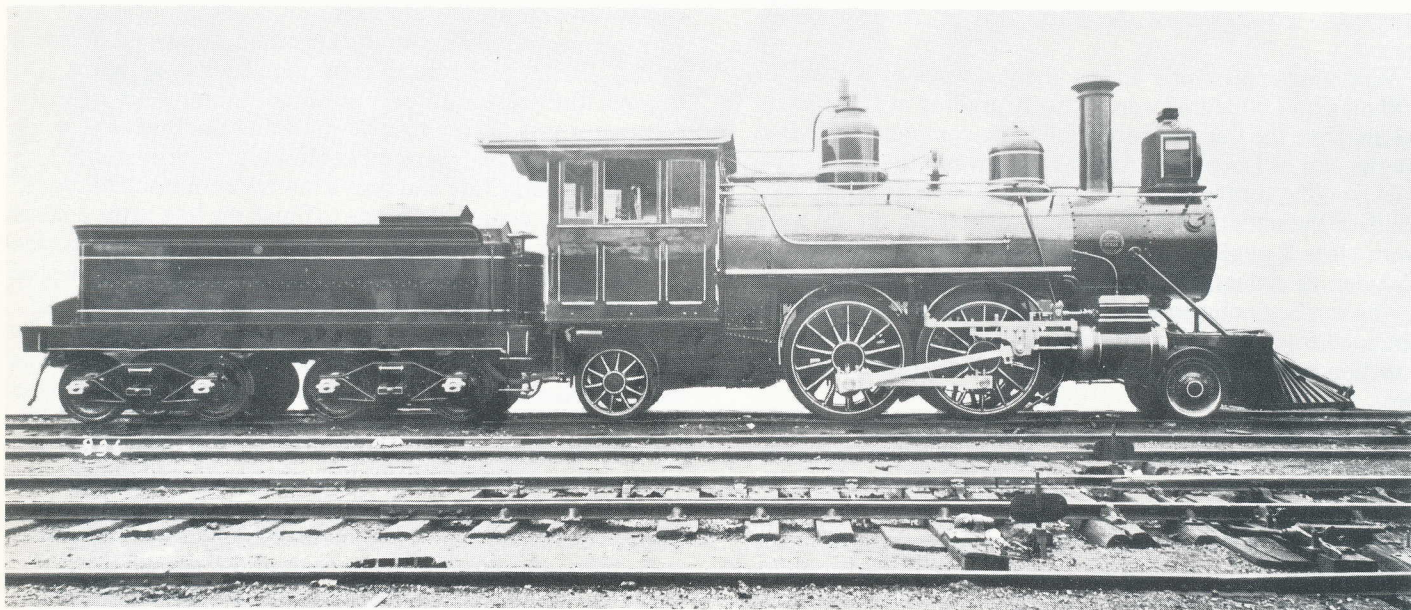
Collection of Robert L. Long



Collection of Theodore A. Xaras

Passengers wait for an ACRR Camden train by the small Brigantine Junction station after detraining from the afternoon mixed train from Brigantine. Note the large trunks and barrels that had just been unloaded from the mixed train's combine.

The Baldwin Locomotive Works built this 2-4-2 in June, 1895, for a Brigantine Transit Company. Although not confirmed, it is believed that this engine was used on the P&B.



Baldwin Locomotive Works photo, H. Broadbelt collection